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THE MONASTERIES (BĀHĀ AND BAHĪ) OF PATAN

A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE CULTURAL TOPOGRAPHY OF A NEWAR TOWN

NIELS GUTSCHOW AND HEMRAJ SHAKYA

This contribution does not aim at providing an understanding of the historical growth process of Patan. The history of Patan is as obscure as that of any other Newar town. It is only now that we have started drawing conclusions from details of urban ritualism¹, implying that certain notions of space could be utilised as evidence which until now was of interest to an anthropologist only.

With processions² as well as the underlying concept of the town plan of Patan - the four stūpas (New. *thūdo*) "guarding" the cardinal points of the compass³ have been dealt with recently. It might therefore suffice to recall that nothing is known about the age of the stūpas - their outer appearance providing no hint whatsoever at dating them earlier than the 16th century. Analysing the map of Patan, however, we come to some conclusions concerning the growth pattern of the town. An early phase of development is characterised by a diagonal road still leading from Nugaḥ in southeast to Tapahiti in northwest. The road follows the contour lines high above the banks of the Bāgmatī (see fig. 1). The same type of spatial organisation characterizes the latest phase of development : a diagonal road leads from Nakabahī to Patan Dhokā, providing a direct link to Kathmandu.

Following the early stage of development for which stands the diagonal road linking several small hamlets, we come across an oriented street-crossing. The elements of this street-crossing point towards Kōnti (north) with the Kumbheśvara/Sarveśvara and towards Thati (south) with Matsyendranāth as well as Balkumārī in the east and Pūco in the west. It was the impact of this street-crossing which characterized further development and from which a grid-like street pattern emerged. It may be noted that the crossing deviates by 24 degrees exactly from the north. No explanation has been found so far for this deviation.

We assume that it is only during the third stage that the present day street-crossing, oriented towards the four stūpas, came to dominate the basic pattern of the town. Although we are not in a position to locate the early palaces (*darbār*) of Patan, we see a developing centre located in the southeastern sector right at the intersection of the street-crossing towards the end of the 16th century.

We are inclined to believe that the basic change in pattern, i.e. the significant shift from the first to the second street-crossing, one block to the east and south, occurred around the beginning of this millennium.

It is, however, the reign of Siddhi Narasiṃha (1618-1658, Nepal samvat 738-778) we would like to concentrate on with the following remarks. Under Siddhi Narasiṃha, Patan reached an early height of cultural development in comparison with Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. The king institutionalized a hierarchic order of the existing monasteries and the new ones built during his rule. A chronicle (*vaṃśāvalī*) tells us of an extension⁴ of Patan and of a translocation of an existing *bāhā* for the purpose of extending the palace.⁵

Moreover, we have an account⁶ mentioning a lot of temples in altogether 37 localities (Nep. *ṭol*) of Patan. All this leads us to assume that the basic pattern of Patan had already fully developed in the middle of the 17th century.

Let us now talk about the pattern of distribution of monasteries (*mahāvihāra*) and branch monasteries (*viḥāra*) which so well determine the cultural, social as well as spatial pattern of Patan.

Today we can count altogether 156 monasteries. Of these, 148 are located in Patan proper and the remaining eight in villages (*Cāpagāuṃ* No. 41, *Bāregāuṃ* No. 154, *Cobhār* No. 39 and No. 156, *Pharpiṇ* No. 151, *Bumgamatī* No. 42, and *Kirtipur* No. 40 and No. 155 - the numbers referring to fig. 2) which belonged to the former domain of the Kingdom of Patan during the reign of the later Malla Kings (16th - 18th centuries). The two monasteries of the western suburb *Pūco* are counted under Patan proper. It should be noted that it was Siddhi Narasiṃha's plan to extend Patan up to *Pūco*.⁷

Of the 156 monasteries, 18 are still counted as the main ones (*mahāvihāra* or *bāhā*; mapped in fig. 2 with full names) whereas 32 are secondary monasteries (*mahāvihāra* or *bahī*; mapped in fig. 2 with circles around numbers). The remaining ones are branch monasteries (*viḥāra* or *kaṣabāhā*)

The main difference between the monasteries is centred on the right of initiation. The 18 main *bāhās* have the right to initiate Vajrācārya - the highest caste group among the Buddhist population, usually referred to as priests - as well as Śākya. The 32 *bahīs*, however, have the sole right to initiate Śākya. The branch monasteries do not have any right of initiation.

The striking information the chronicle provides is the order of hierarchy and precedence, which was kept nearly unchanged until now.⁸ Only 12 of the 18 *bāhās* of today existed when Siddhi Narasiṃha set the rules for the election of the heads (*nāyke*) of the *bāhā* and the order of precedence. Among these, Yacchubāhā (No. 130), Subāhā (No. 138), Cūkabāhā (No. 36), Ukubāhā (No. 2) and Gujibāhā (No. 17) had a head who presided over the chiefs of these five *bāhās*. It should be noted that all these *bāhās* are located in the southeast of the town.

The newly established *bāhās* were named as Oṃbāhā (No. 124), Jyobāhā (No. 127) and Dhumbāhā (No. 110), all located in the northeastern sector of the town. Of those *bāhās* in the villages Cobāhā (No. 39) in Cobhār and Kyapūbāhā (No. 40) in Kirtipur were counted among the 18 main *bāhās*. The chronicle thus counts 17 *bāhās* as the leading ones. Śibāhā (No. 74) was established only after the rules were set by Siddhi Narasiṃha. It was thus left to the succeeding kings to provide the right of initiation to Śibāhā.

Yet the order of the 15 *bāhās* is still observed in the performance of certain rituals. Picture 5 shows 150 "ajus" (eldermen) being offered the "five offerings" (*pañcadān*) by a certain Siddhirāj Śākya of Nagbāhā in the courtyard of Akibāhā on the occasion of a family event. Each of the 15 *bāhās* sends 10 ajus to take part in that ritual. Thus we see that although the right of initiation was given to two *bāhās* outside the town as well as to the one that was later established, certain activities were confined to those 15 *bāhās* which existed during the reign of Siddhi Narasiṃha.

Among the most spectacular spatial manipulations we have to consider the translocation of the Haṅgbāhā from the present side of the palace towards the quarter of Gābāhā. Even now a special ritual reminds us of that manipulation thus providing an idea of how precarious the transformation of a given ritual infrastructure must have been. Legend has it that the Haṅgbāhā was founded at the site of a rivulet. When fire was seen above that rivulet it was taken as an auspicious sign to build a monastery. Fire and water are symbols of worlds above and below earth, thus defining a sacred place of communication between this world and

that of the gods.⁹

Even now, during the month of Gunla - the holy month of the Buddhists, corresponding to August of the Gregorian calendar - a massive square-shaped copper vessel, embellished with a Buddha image, is placed right in front of the main entrance of mulcok, the most important place within the palace. This vessel seems to aim at reconciling history. Space had been transformed - yet preceding conditions seem to convey certain qualities of space. In a way we have to believe that a given spatial order is ritually unchangeable. Therefore, if any change, i.e. any manipulation changing a religious environment, takes place, a ritual is needed for reconciliation with the gods or powers concerned.

Of the former 148 monasteries only a few are now in good state and very few still function as a monastery, the most active of them being Kvābāhā (No. 104). Some bāhās are hardly traceable like Kontibāhā (No. 106) and Kanibāhā (No. 149). Some bāhās have preserved only the Buddha shrine (Kinubāhā, No. 43; Jyāṭhābāhā, No. 14) whereas others - like Ubāhāgathica (No. 2), Ukubāhāla (No. 1), Būbāhā (No. 60), Gābāhā (No. 59) or Kvābāhā (No. 104) - still play an active role in the ritual life of Patan. Some bāhās have been converted into predominantly Hindu shrines, leaving no trace of the former monastery, e.g. Śīkabahī (No. 153), the place of which is now occupied by the piṭha of Cāmuṇḍā, one of the eight mother goddesses (*Aṣṭamātrkā*) of Patan.

NOTES

This paper is part of an extensive survey of the Newar towns of the Kathmandu valley, which was made possible by a grant of the GERMAN RESEARCH COUNCIL. The former monasteries of Patan were traced in March 1974. This paper aims at nothing more than providing dates. A historical view of the topography of Patan is still missing. The transcription of the list was made with the help of Mr. Thakurlal Manandhar and Dr. Michael Witzel. Thanks to their encouragement the manuscript was finished in december 1977.

1) see as a case study : GUTSCHOW, N. and KÖLVER, B. : *Ordered space - Concepts and Functions in a town of Nepal*. Nepal Research Centre Publications, No. 1, Wiesbaden 1975.

2) GUTSCHOW, N. : *Prozessionen in Pāṭan*; in : *Storia della Citta*, No. 4, Milano 1977, p. 31-44.

3) WIESNER, Ullrich : *Zur Frage der sogenannten Aśoka-Stūpas in Patan, Nepal*; in : *Zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens - 50 Jahre Lehre und Forschung an der Universität Köln*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 189-198.

4) HASRAT, B.J. : *History of Nepal - As Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers*. Hashiarpur 1970.

5) WRIGHT, D. : *History of Nepal*. Cambridge 1977, p. 234.

6) KUNU SHARMA : *Kīrtīpataka*. Pāṭan 2018 (1961).

7) see note 4

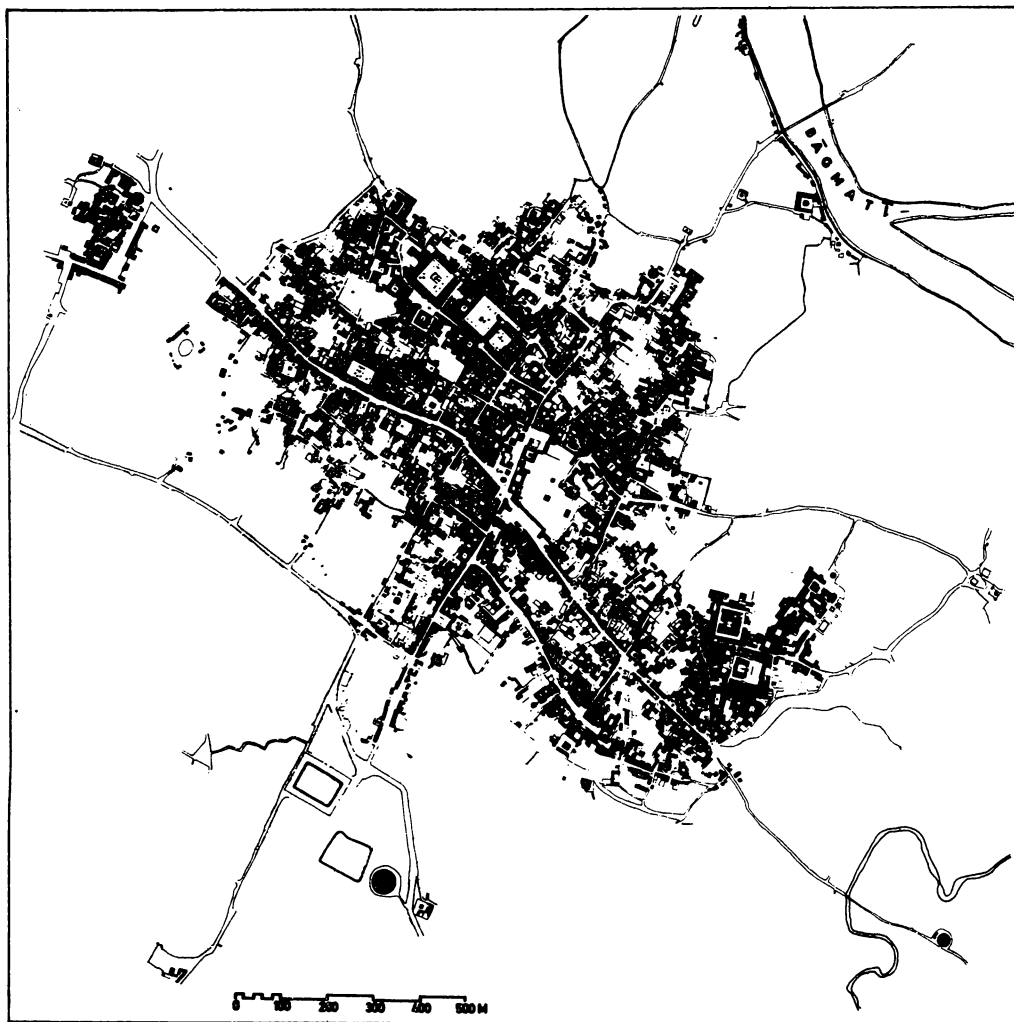
8) WRIGHT, op. cit., p. 234-235.

9) For cosmic religion see IRWIN's enlightened article on the Aśoka pillars : IRWIN, John : *Aśokan Pillars : a Reassessment of the Evidence, Part IV : Symbolism*; in : *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXVIII, Nov. 1976, p. 734-753.

LOCATION NAMES

<i>cheṃ</i>	-	house	<i>hiṭi</i>	-	fountain
<i>nani</i>	-	courtyard	<i>gallī</i>	-	lane
<i>cuka</i>	-	courtyard	<i>taḥdham</i>	-	big
<i>libī</i>	-	courtyard	<i>aīdham</i>	-	small
<i>dune</i>	-	inside (the house)	<i>tvā</i>	-	quarter
<i>dusa</i>					

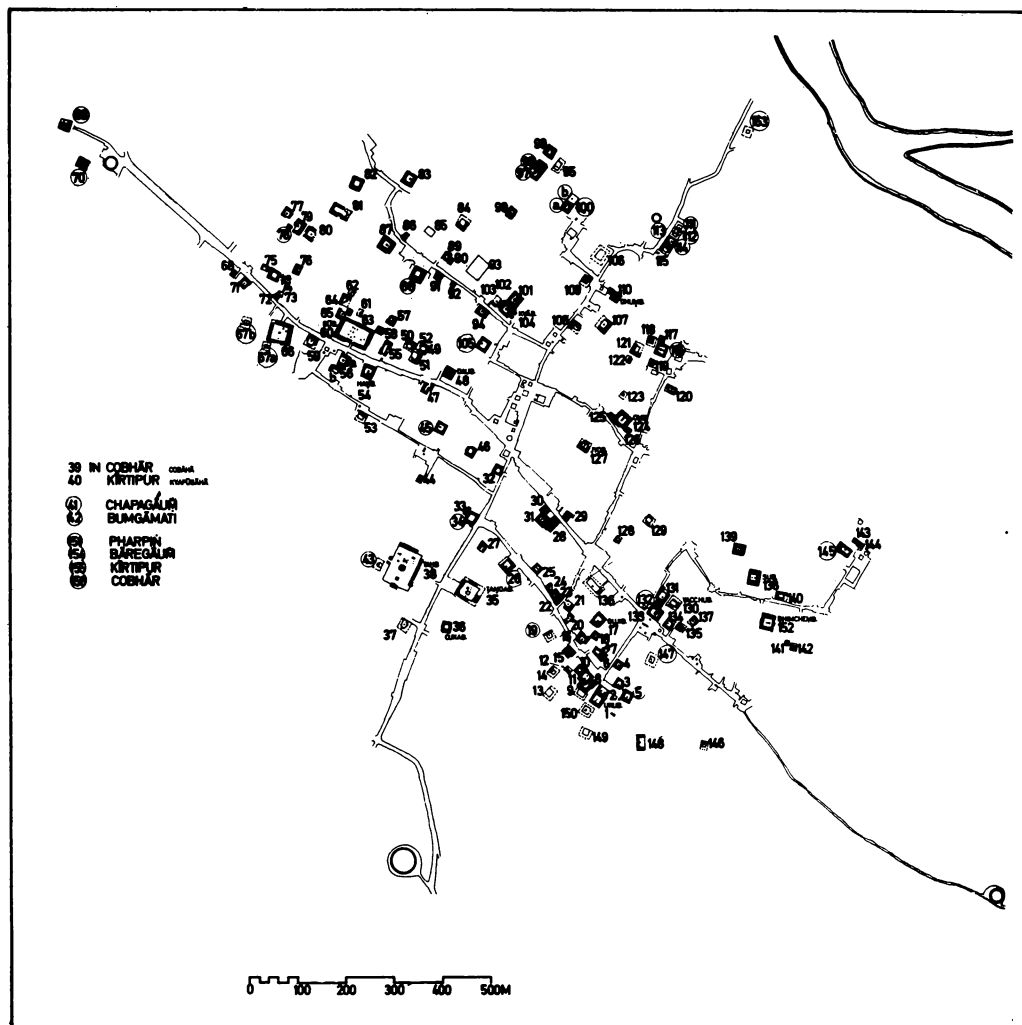
FIGURES AND PLATES



1

PĀṬAN

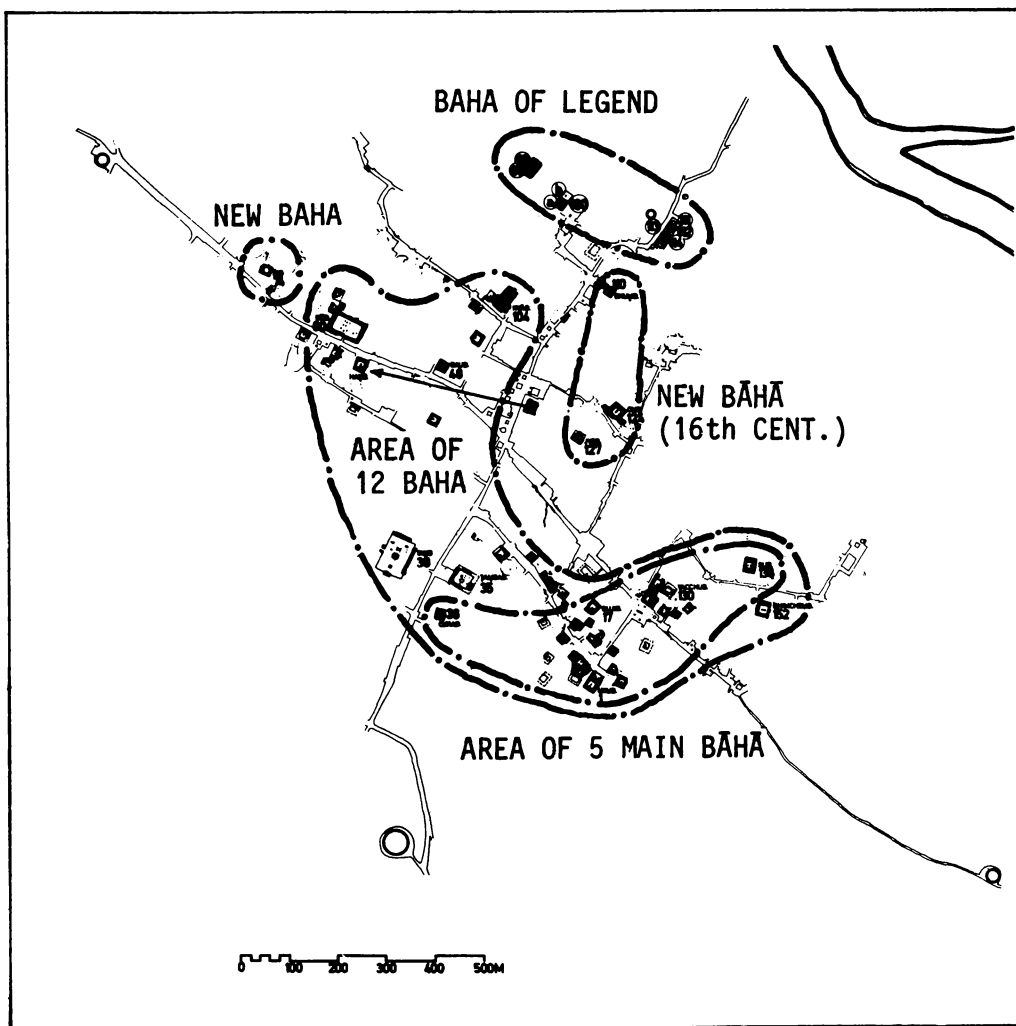
Built up area in 1970. A street cross (18 degrees difference from the right angle), defined by 4 stūpas underlies the town-plan. The square (Thyākābāhā 4 by 4 m) or rectangular (Būbāhā 60 by 34 m) courtyards of the monasteries fit very well into the grid-like pattern of the streets.



2

PĀṬAN

Of the 156 listed monasteries of the former domain of Pāṭan 146 are situated in Pātan proper, 2 in the western suburb of Pūco (nep. Pulcok) and 8 in villages west and south of the town.



3

PĀṬAN

Not much is known about the historical topography of Pāṭan. During the reign of Siddhi Narasimha however 12 existing and 4 newly founded monasteries (mahāvihāra) were cited. A transfer was done (Hapbāhā) to enable the king to enlarge his palace.

4. Patan : Air view of Ikhālakhū, the main square of one of the 24 quarters (Nep. *ṭol*, New. *tvā*) of Patan at the intersection of two streets parallel to the street-crossing which underlies the town-plan. . Around the square with its Bhairava, Gaṇeś and Jagannāth temple as well





LIST OF THE MONASTERIES

List of the 156 bāhās of Patan and the domain of Patan. The 18 main bāhās are italicized in full length, whereas the 32 bahīs are only partially italicized (*mahāvihāra*). The other 106 bāhās are so-called kaca-bāhās or branch monasteries (*vihāra*).

Two of the 18 main bāhās and six of the 32 bahīs are located outside Patan proper within neighbouring villages.

SANSKRIT-NAME	NEWARI-NAME
1. <i>Omkuḷiśrī Rudravarṇamahāvihāra</i>	<i>Ukubāhāla</i>
2. <i>Khaṇḍacukavihāra</i>	<i>Ubāhāgethica</i>
3. <i>Pūrṇacandravihāra</i>	<i>Dunebāhā</i>
4. <i>Jayativarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Jatibāhā</i>
5. <i>Omkuḷimahāvihāra</i>	<i>Ubāhābahī</i>
6. <i>Bodhimaṇḍapavihāra</i>	<i>Mahābaudha</i>
7. <i>Dhanavajravihāra</i>	<i>Ghanāndabāhā</i>
8. <i>Hiraṇyālābhavihāra</i>	<i>Bhājjudhanabāhā</i>
9. <i>Ratnalābhavihāra</i>	<i>Bhimarājabāhā</i>
10. <i>Rūpavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Nagubāhā</i>
11. <i>Ikṣavihāra</i>	<i>Icheṃbāhā</i>
12. <i>Dhanavīrasimhavihāra</i>	<i>Dhanabāhā</i>
13. <i>Vasuvārṇavihāra</i>	<i>Basubāhā</i>
14. <i>Padmavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Jyāṭhābāhā</i>
15. <i>Dinavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Hīṭīphusabāhā</i>
16. <i>Amṛtavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Takabāhā</i>
17. <i>Vaiṣṇavarṇamahāvihāra</i>	<i>Gujibāhā</i>
18. <i>Bhāṣkaravarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Siddhibāhā</i>
19. <i>Sthavīrapātramahāvihāra</i>	<i>Thapābahī</i>
20. <i>Samantabhadravihāra</i>	<i>Pālubāhā</i>
21. <i>Siṃhacukavihāra</i>	<i>Sikucābāhā</i>
22. <i>Kuṭṭasimhavihāra</i>	<i>Kutubāhā</i>
23. <i>Jayaśrīvihāra</i>	<i>Jothābāhā</i>
24. <i>Kulacaityakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Kuladevbāhā</i>
25. <i>Devadattavihāra</i>	<i>Naudhabāhā</i>
26. <i>Jyeṣṭhavarṇamahāvihāra</i>	<i>Jyābāhābahī</i>
27. <i>Cakrakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Khvākhanabāhā</i>
28. <i>Dharmakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Harṣabāhā</i>
29. <i>Bhājumanakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Gvaṃgaḥbāhā</i>
30. <i>Triratnasimhavihāra</i>	<i>Triratnasimbāhā</i>
31. <i>Dhanavīrakuṭāgāravihāra</i>	<i>Dhanadeobāhā</i>
32. <i>Hātigalavihāra</i>	<i>Haugabāhā</i>

33. Bhājudhanasimhavihāra	Ibābahīdune
34. Rājāsṛimāhavihāra	Ibābahī
35. Jyēṣṭhavarṇamahavihāra	Taṃgaḥbāhā
36. Cakravarnamahavihāra	Cūkabāhā
37. Thatinānavihāra	Thatibāhā
38. Dharmakīrtimahavihāra	Taḥbāhā
39. Kaochapālagirimahavihāra	Cobāhā (in Cobhār near Kirtipur)
40. Jagatpālamahavihāra	Kyupūbāhā (in Kirtipur)
41. Perakhāmāhavihāra	Wabāhī (in Cāpagāum)
42. Amarāvātimahavihāra	Buṃgabāhī (in Buṃgamatī)
43. Lokakīrtimahavihāra	Kinūbāhī
44. Ikanānavihāra	Ikabāhā
45. Surāścandramahavihāra	Nhāykāmbāhī
46. Jaganmaṅgaḥvihāra	Jombāhā
47. Dharmakīrtivihāra	Bhelkūbāhā
48. Dattanāmamahavihāra	Daubāhā
49. Yokulīvihāra	Yokubāhā
50. Vṛṣarājavihāra	Briṣṛājabāhā
51. Jagajjyotirvihāra	Jogadhūsabāhā
52. Yokulivihāra	Kakubāhā
53. Jyēnavihāra	Jyānabāhā
54. Ratnākaramahavihāra	Haḥbāhā
55. Udayadevavihāra	Wanabāhā
56. Yantāvihāra	Walābāhā
57. Navavihāra	Nhūbāhā
58. Bhairavasimhavihāra	Bhailasimāhā
59. Gaḍavihāra	Gābāhā
60. Yaśodharamahavihāra	Būbāhā
61. Sukhāvātivihāra	Bhājupatibāhā
62. Devajotivihāra	Naṃdayabūbāhā
63. Devarājavihāra	Devarājabūbāhā
64. Ikunānavihāra	Ikubāhā
65. Padmāvātivihāra	Naḥbāhā
66. Padmāvātiyekulivihāra	Naḥbāhākulāṃ
67. (a) Kāmukanāmamahavihāra	Khvayabāhī
67. (b) Kāmukanāmamahavihāra	Khvayabāhī
68. Kanakadattavihāra	Natvābāhā
69. Rakṣeśvarimahavihāra	Pūcobāhī
70. Śilāpuraḍānāgirimahavihāra	Cvepūcobāhī
71. Koṭṭavihāra	Kvaṭhabāhā
72. Caṃgalavihāra	Caṃgalabāhā
73. Dharmakīrtivihāra	Dharmakīrtibāhā
74. Śrīvatsamahavihāra	Sibāhā

75. Śrīvatsadundubhivihāra	Sijabāhā
76. Kanakavarṇavihāra	Kanakabāhā
77. Chvācavihāra	Chāyabāhā
78. Chvācavihāra	Cidhamguchāyabāhī
79. Cakramuktavihāra	Ganeśabāhā
80. Mūlāśrīvihāra	Mūbāhā
81. Cukhāvihāra	Dudubāhā
82. Suprekṣaṇavihāra	Mikhābāhā
83. Hemapurīvihāra	Yetābāhā
84. Ataskīrtivihāra	Akibāhā
85. Bhāṣkaravarṇavihāra	Nyākḥacuka
86. Bhājubalavihāra	Unacubhājubalabāhā
87. Śrīvatsavihāra	Athabāhā
88. Lokakīrtimahāvihāra	Nakabāhī
89. Mativihāra	Matibāhā
90. Govindasiṃhavihāra	Matibāhācukacā
91. Jyotivarṇavihāra	Khāchembāhā
92. Ratnajyotivihāra	Thyākābāhā
93. Paśuvarṇavihāra	Ilanhedilko
94. Navavihāra	Nhūbāhā
95. Yokhāchembivihāra	Yokhāchembāhā
96. Suvarṇavihāra	Ikhāchembāhā
97. Nāpicandramahāvihāra	Duntubāhī
98. Gopicandramahāvihāra	Pintabāhī
99. Ānandavihāra	Ānandabāhā
100. (a) Lalitavanamahāvihāra	Cīdham Kontibāhī
100. (b) Lalitavanamahāvihāra	Taḥdham Kontibāhī
101. Vagīśvaravihāra	Sasunanī
102. Micchuvihāra	Ilāṃnanī
103. Dvārikāvihāra	Ilāṃnanī
104. Hiraṇyavarṇamahāvihāra	Kvābāhā
105. Maṇimaṇḍapamahāvihāra	Dhaugābāhī
106. Śaṃkhādharakṛtavihāra	Kontibāhā
107. Kulimavihāra	Kulimabāhā
108. Svamṭhavihāra	Svamṭhabāhā
109. Itumvihāra	Kobāhā
110. Guṇalakṣmīkīrtimahāvihāra	Dhumbāhā
111. Yampimahāvihāra	Ībāhī
112. Yampiyantamahāvihāra	Ībāhī
113. Yampiyantamahāvihāra	Ībāhī
114. Yampiyantamahāvihāra	Ībāhī
115. Karuṇācukavihāra	Karuṇācuka
116. Saptapuramahāvihāra	Cikambāhī

117. Maṇikuṭavihāra	Burmavaidyabāhā
118. Triratnavīravīhāra	Triratnabāhā
119. Bhaiṣajyārājavihāra	Bhaiṣajyabāhā
120. Hodolanāmavihāra	Honabāhā
121. Kularatnavīhāra	Kularatnabāhā
122. Yantavihāra	Yantabāhā
123. Lakṣadhanavihāra	Lakhyadharmcuka
124. Vajrakīrtimahāvīhāra	Oṃbāhā
125. Sūryavatravihāra	Jagatamunibāhā
126. Dharmakīrtivīhāra	Lakhedhambāhā
127. Jetavarṇamahāvīhāra	Jyobāhā
128. Suvarṇākhyavihāra	Suṃbāhā
129. Yaṃgraugranāmavihāra	Yanmubāhā
130. Balādharaḡuptamahāvīhāra	Yacchubāhā
131. Amṛtavarṇavihāra	Nhūbāhā
132. Amṛtavarṇamahāvīhāra	Dathubahī
133. Mitravārṇavihāra	Tvāyabāhā
134. Hendupativīhāra	Bhīṃdyobāhā
135. Layanacaityabimbavihāra	Henubāhā
136. Ratnajayavihāra	Sagabāhā
137. Jayamaṅgalavihāra	Tanabāhā
138. Jayamanoharamahāvīhāra	Subāhā
139. Thakūṃvīhāra	Thakūṃbāhā
140. Jnānacandravihāra	Pincheṃbāhā
141. Pilācheṃvīhāra	Pilācheṃbāhā
142. Bhīmacandravihāra	Pilācheṃbāhā
143. Padmotaśrīmahāvīhāra	Guṭṭabāhī (Dathubahī)
144. Basucaśīlamahāvīhāra	Guṭṭabāhī (Taḡdhambahī)
145. Gustalamahāvīhāra	Guṭṭabāhī (Cīdhambahī)
146. Paṇḍavavihāra	Lukhusībāhā
147. Itirājamahāvīhāra	Ilāyabāhī
148. Yogalāmkhyavihāra	Yaṃgabāhā
149. Kanakavarṇavihāra	Kanibāhā
150. Yantāribīvīhāra	Yetālibī
151. Gaganākṣaramahāvīhāra	Phaṃpībāhā (in Pharpīn)
152. Mayūravarṇamahāvīhāra	Bhīncheṃbāhā
153.	Sikabāhī
154.	Bāregāumbāhī (in Bāregāum)
155.	Kyupūbahī (in Kīrtipur)
156.	Cobābahī (in Cobhār)